

# Certification Title Name Change of RRA to RHIA and ART to RHIT

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## Background Information

Throughout its history, AHIMA has responded to industry dynamics with corresponding changes to its name and certification titles. The Association of Record Librarians of North America became the American Association of Medical Record Librarians. The Registered Record Librarian (RRL) evolved into the Registered Record Administrator (RRA).

AHIMA is again at such a juncture. Based on multiple years of research and evaluation, the titles moving forward are:

- Registered Record Administrator (RRA) » Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA)
- Accredited Record Technician (ART) » Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT)

## Rationale

Since the Association changed its name in 1991 from the American Medical Record Association (AMRA) to the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA), members and volunteer leaders have expressed concern over the lack of consistency between the organization's new name and its certification titles. AHIMA's Board of Directors formally addressed this issue through a Vision 2006 action item that called for reevaluation of current credential titles.

In October 1997, this evaluation progressed with the hiring of a naming consultant, who reviewed more than 1000 possible certification titles. Selecting the most applicable, Board members and staff discussed a variety of potential titles with volunteer leaders at 1998 Team Talks and the 1998 House of Delegates. Key steps in this evaluation process were issue forums at the 1998 House, where delegates considered both the advantages and disadvantages of changing titles. Although opinions varied, several overriding reasons in favor of changing titles came forward:

- current credentials do not accurately reflect what HIM professionals do in today's workplace
- more contemporary titles are needed
- certification names are not in sync with the Association name
- the timing is right as HIM professionals move into new areas

Market research was conducted with CIOs, COOs, CFOs, and human resources professionals—groups that represent "employers" for the HIM profession overall. Participants in these focus groups consistently said that the current titles were inaccurate in representing the skill sets and roles of today's HIM professionals. The current "RRA" and "ART" titles were thought to imply paper records. Participants also stated these titles seem out of date, are difficult to understand, and sound limiting in their description of the work performed. These employers consistently said that certification titles should be changed. They specifically stated that the use of "health information" in certification titles seemed more compatible with the current direction of both the profession and the industry.

The titles Registered Health Information Administrator and Registered Health Information Technician were selected as new credential titles for the following reasons:

## "Registered"

Feedback from the focus groups, which included employer representatives, strongly supported the importance of modifiers such as "registered" or "certified"—they serve as immediate validations of professional skills. "Registered" was chosen as the most appropriate designation for overall professional HIM certifications. "Accredited" was not used because it is more often

applied to an institution, rather than an individual. "Certified" will continue to be used for competencies in specialty areas, such as coding.

## **"Health Information"**

This phrase accurately describes the domain of the profession's knowledge and expertise, which in recent years has expanded in scope well beyond the medical record. "Health information" also provides an updated and consistent link to the Association's name. The Board Strategy Team omitted the word "management" because the market research revealed that it simply made the titles too long in the view of employers and members alike.

## **"Administrator" and "Technician"**

These familiar terms lend a sense of continuity to the new titles. The term "Manager" was initially considered in place of "Administrator," but again, market research did not support its use. Focus group participants perceived "manager" more as a job title implying employee supervision rather than a description of a particular skill set.

## Resolution

**Topic:** Certification Title Name Change of RRA to RHIA and ART to RHIT

**Intent:** Change Current Certification Titles for RRA and ART

**Addressed To:** 1999 House of Delegates

**Originators:** AHIMA Board of Directors Council on Certification

**Approved by:** 1999 House of Delegates

**Date:** October 3, 1999

Whereas, throughout its history, AHIMA has responded to industry dynamics with corresponding changes to its name and certification titles;

Whereas, since the Association changed its name in 1991 from the American Medical Record Association (AMRA) to the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA), members and volunteer leaders have expressed concern over the lack of consistency between the organization's new name and its certification titles;

Whereas, market research supports that the current titles are inaccurate in representing the skill sets and roles of today's HIM professionals;

Whereas, the use of "health information" in certification titles is more compatible with the current direction of both the profession and the industry;

Whereas, the term "registered" serves as a validation of professional skills for both administrator and technician practice;

Whereas, the phrase "health information" accurately describes the domain of the professional's knowledge and expertise, which in recent years has expanded in scope well beyond the medical record;

Whereas, the phrase "health information" provides an updated and consistent link to the Association's name;

Whereas, the terms "administrator" and "technician" are consistent with domains of health information practice.

Resolved, that the certification title for Registered Record Administrator (RRA) be changed to Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA) and that the certification title for Accredited Record Technician (ART) be changed to Registered Health Information Technician (RHIT), both effective January 1, 2000.

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